

Long Range Strike Bomber, the Ford-class aircraft carrier, and the littoral combat ship. These provisions will ensure accountability for results, promote transparency, protect taxpayers, and drive the Department to deliver our warfighters the capabilities they need on time, as promised, and at reasonable costs.

The NDAA also upholds America's commitment to its allies and partners. It authorizes \$3.4 billion to support our Afghan partners as they fight to preserve the gains of the last 15 years and defeat the terrorists who seek to destabilize the region and attack American interests. The legislation provides \$1.3 billion for counter-ISIL operations. The NDAA fully supports the European Reassurance Initiative to increase the capability and readiness of U.S. and NATO forces to deter and, if necessary, respond to Russian aggression. It also authorizes up to \$500 million in security assistance to Ukraine, including lethal assistance. We should give the Ukrainian people the ability to defend themselves. Finally, the legislation includes \$239 million for U.S.-Israel cooperative missile defense programs.

As we continue to support allies and partners against common threats, the NDAA makes major reforms to the Pentagon's complex and unwieldy security cooperation enterprise, which has complicated the Department of Defense's ability to effectively prioritize, plan, execute, and oversee these activities.

This legislation also makes sure we are not providing support to adversaries like Russia. The United States' assured access to space continues to rely on Russian rocket engines. Purchasing these engines provides a financial benefit to Vladimir Putin's cronies, including individuals who have been sanctioned by the United States, and it subsidizes the Russian military industrial base. This is unacceptable at a time when Russia continues to occupy Crimea, destabilize Ukraine, menace our NATO allies, violate the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and bomb moderate rebels in Syria. That is why the NDAA repeals a provision from last year's Omnibus appropriations bill that furthered dependence on Russia.

Once the nine Russian rocket engines allowed by the past two NDAs are expended, the Defense Department would be required to achieve assured access to space without the use of rocket engines designed or manufactured in Russia. In testimony before the committee, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Secretary of the Air Force each confirmed that the United States can meet its assured access to space requirements without the use of Russian rocket engines.

We do not have to rely on Russia for access to space. Given the urgency of eliminating reliance on Russian engines, the NDAA will allow for up to half of the funds for the development of

a replacement launch vehicle or propulsion system to be made available for offsetting any potential increase in launch costs as a result of prohibitions on Russian rocket engines. With \$1.2 billion budgeted over the next 5 years, we can cover the costs of ending our reliance on Russia while developing the next generation of American space launch capabilities.

Finally, the legislation takes several steps to bolster border security and homeland defense. It authorizes \$688 million for Department of Defense counterdrug programs. It enhances information sharing and operational coordination between the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security. It provides additional support for the U.S. Southern Command, and it continues support for the U.S.-Israel anti-tunneling cooperation program, which helps to improve our efforts to restrict the flow of drugs across the U.S. southern border.

I say to my colleagues: This is an ambitious piece of legislation, and it is one that reflects the growing threats to our Nation. Everything about the NDAA is threat driven—everything, that is, but its top line of \$602 billion. That is an arbitrary figure set by last year's budget agreement, having nothing to do with events in the world, and which itself was a product of 5 years of letting politics, not strategy, determine the level of funding for our national defense. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs GEN Martin Dempsey described last year's defense budget as "the lower ragged edge of manageable risks." Yet here we are 1 year later with defense spending arbitrarily capped at \$17 billion below what our military needed and planned for last year. I don't know what lies beneath the lower ragged edge of manageable, but this is what I fear it means—that our military is becoming less and less able to deter conflict and that if, God forbid, deterrence does fail somewhere and we end up in conflict, our Nation will deploy young Americans into battle without sufficient training or equipment to fight a war that will take longer, be larger, cost more, and ultimately claim more American lives than it otherwise would have.

That is the growing risk we face, and for the sake of the men and women serving in our military, we cannot change course soon enough. The Senate will have the opportunity to do just that when we consider my amendment to reverse the budget-driven cuts to the capabilities of our Armed Forces that are needed to defend the Nation. I hope we will seize this opportunity.

We ask a lot of our men and women in uniform, and they never let us down. We must not let them down. As we move forward with consideration of the NDAA, I stand ready to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass this important legislation and give our military the resources they need and deserve.

Again, I note the presence of my esteemed colleague and friend, the rank-

ing member of the Armed Services Committee, without whom this legislation would not have been possible. It happens to be a source of great pride to me—and I hope to Americans who believe that we are bitterly divided—that as an example of defending this Nation and providing for men and women whom we send into harm's way, the Senator from Rhode Island and I have developed a partnership that I believe has been incredibly productive. Without the kind of partnership that I have enjoyed with my friend from Rhode Island, it would not have been possible to produce this legislation, which is obviously the most important obligation we have, and that is to defend the Nation.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to proceed to S. 2943 is agreed to.

The clerk will report the bill.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2943) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

AMENDMENT NO. 4206

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I call up amendment No. 4206.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Arizona [Mr. MCCAIN], for Mrs. FISCHER, proposes an amendment numbered 4206.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the requirement that the Secretary of Defense implement measures to maintain the critical wartime medical readiness skills and core competencies of health care providers within the Armed Forces)

On page 423, strike lines 16 and 17 and insert the following:

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (c), not later than 90 days after submitting the report required by subsection (d), or one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, whichever occurs first, the Secretary of Defense

On page 425, strike lines 10 through 18 and insert the following:

(5) The Secretary shall ensure that any covered beneficiary who may be affected by modifications, reductions, or eliminations implemented under this section will be able to receive through the purchased care component of the TRICARE program any medical services that will not be available to such covered beneficiary at a military treatment facility as a result of such modifications, reductions, or eliminations.